

Agreement Setting Overview

Every time a group meets to devote themselves to a common goal, it is almost as though they are *back at the beginning again* in terms of negotiating the terms of collaboration. Problems and challenges will always exist or arise, therefore, the only aspect of our teamwork that can improve is *how* we approach the process of collaboration individually, but ultimately collectively.

-Stephanie Crossno, OK A+ Fellow

What is Agreement Setting?

Agreement is a process which provides a safe place to examine group process and come to a consensus about how the group members want to be with each other.

Where does it come from?

Agreement setting comes from practices like group and family therapy, business communication, radical psychiatry and leadership training.

Why Have Agreements?

Not every group can articulate their Agreements, but every group has some, whether they voice them or not. Unwritten rules cause discord. Group agreements clarify your working process and eliminate secrets and hidden agendas. When everyone helps to compose Agreements, everyone assumes responsibility for sticking to them, and everyone has a stake in enforcing them. Group agreements create safety. Creative groups need to nurture an atmosphere where people feel safe enough to take risks. Creative thinking requires commitment, vulnerability and trust. Everyone in a group holds the responsibility for maintaining a safe environment that will foster creativity.

How to Reach Consensus on Agreements

Everybody affected by the Agreements should help craft them.

The Process

Poses and builds a 100% consensus on the question:

- *What behaviors do we need from each other to feel safe and do our most creative work?*
- See that everyone gets a copy. Have them posted whenever the group meets. Refer and/or modify them whenever it is appropriate.
- Maintain the group history. Whenever someone new comes into the group, reconsider the Agreements together. Give newcomers time to get clarity about what they mean. Talk about proposed changes, and get agreement all around..